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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2954  
INFO RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2538  
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC

UNCLAS AMMAN 005952

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DEPT PASS USTR  
CAIRO FOR AGCOUNS KSEIFARTH

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: EAGR ETRD JO  
SUBJECT: Jordan Lifts Its Temporary Ban on US Beef

¶1. SUMMARY: The Government of Jordan resumed imports of US beef after the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) endorsed the recommendations of the Higher Committee (HC) for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) to adopt the new World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) risk-based code on BSE. END SUMMARY.

¶2. On March 22, 2006 the GoJ stopped issuing import licenses for US Beef due to reports of the discovery of a second case of BSE in Alabama. Minister of Agriculture Akef Zu'bi told a visiting USDA-FAS delegation in March 2006 that the GOJ would lift the ban swiftly. According to Agriculture Ministry contacts, however, the HC resisted re-opening Jordan to US beef.

¶3. On June 6 the HC adopted the new OIE code, which categorizes the US as a low risk country for BSE. As a consequence, licensed shipments of US beef that had been held up at the port in Aqaba were cleared through Customs, but Jordan still remained closed to further US beef imports because the GOJ continued its policy of granting no new licenses to US beef exporters.

¶4. On July 4, 2006, the Minister of Agriculture signed a decree to resume the issuance of import licenses for U.S. beef based on detailed recommendations submitted by the HC for BSE.

¶5. The adoption of this new BSE code empowers the implementing authority, the MoA, to handle day to day issues and to evaluate the risk status of the supplier country as long as it is below the risk level of one BSE case per one million cattle.

¶6. At least three known new shipments are being prepared to Jordan market valued, one valued at US\$ 0.3 million.

¶7. COMMENT: The Ministry imposed a similar ban on U.S. beef in the spring of 2005 after an earlier case of BSE was discovered in the U.S. and post persuaded the GOJ to lift it in late 2005. Post also worked hard to get this latest ban lifted. The GoJ's adoption of the OIE's risk-based standards should prevent a repetition if future BSE cases are discovered in the U.S.

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